

TO: Members of the Appropriations Committee

Feb. 17, 2009

RE: OPPOSE RAID ON COMMUNITY INVESTMENT ACT FUNDS (Bill 228)

FROM: Katchen Coley (Middletown Garden Club)

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When the Community Investment Act (CIA) was first proposed, garden clubs from across the State were squarely behind the idea. As gardeners we extend the care for the ecology of our own backyards to the conservation of our State's natural resources. Consequently many gardeners worked hard to convince the Legislature that a dependable source of funds is needed to achieve this goal. Previously the preservation of open space and farmland had been dependent on bonding, a very "iffy" source at best. With the passage of CIA in 2005, the State took a great leap forward in putting a dependable foundation under the ability to move quickly to save important lands for a healthy Ct. future. I haven't heard of any citizen registering a document at their town hall, who balked at paying a fee of \$30. At last Ct. was on its way toward making real strides in open space and farmland preservation.

Now with this raid on those supposedly dedicated funds, Connecticut will have to go to the back of the line of other States. In this economic crisis, many farmers and owners of undeveloped land, may well have to give up their dreams of preserving their lands. It would be an ideal time for the State to step forward to help them – but with no CIA funds to do this, the owners may have to sell to developers – an irreversible blow to the preservation of Connecticut's natural resources.

CIA has also helped communities preserve open space and helped farmers keep their farms producing, thereby providing jobs and tax revenue to our communities.

Committee Members, remember that economic downturns come and eventually go – but once our land is gone, it is gone forever.